



The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA) Newsletter is a monthly venue of information and updates on afterschool programs and policies.

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### In this issue:

- » **Update from the IAA Network Leads**
- » **National Policy Developments from the Afterschool Alliance**
- » **Building Citywide Out-of-School Time Systems**
- » **A Look at the Foundations in Quality Standards Workshops**
- » **IAA Legislative Update**
- » **IAA Partners with Iowa Public Television to Provide Literacy Tools**
- » **Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor**
- » **A Bit of Background on Burke Milnes, IAA's Americorps VISTA**
- » **Upcoming Events, Professional Development, and Funding Opportunities**

### Update from the IAA Network Leads

Happy Holidays from the Iowa Afterschool Alliance!

Although December is a short month in our office (the holidays are a good time to recharge and enjoy our families) – there is plenty of news in this month's newsletter from around the state and country regarding afterschool. We would like to thank our friends, partners, and afterschool providers for doing what they do every day – support our children and youth as they grow and learn, becoming better people because of our afterschool programs and dedicated afterschool staff. We hope that the new year finds you all well and exploring new opportunities. Please enjoy this newsletter and we'll see you in 2010!

*Best wishes this holiday from your friends at the Iowa Afterschool Alliance.*

*Sincerely,*

*The Iowa Afterschool Alliance Team*

*Brooke Findley, Michelle Rich, Amelia Colwell, and Burke Milnes*

## National Policy Developments from the Afterschool Alliance

The IAA is proud to provide an update on the policy developments relating to afterschool issues provided by the Afterschool Alliance.



Perhaps one of the greatest successes seen for afterschool this year is that Congress has [increased the appropriation to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program](#) by \$35 million in 2010. While afterschool has received more attention than ever, there have also been many programs – and the children and families they serve – hurt tremendously by the recession. The Afterschool Alliance has worked hard to represent afterschool providers and advocates and to keep afterschool at the forefront of policy discussions. The Afterschool Alliance has released groundbreaking [new research](#), helped the field access funding available in the [economic stimulus package](#), held the [8th annual Afterschool for All Challenge](#), celebrated the biggest [Lights On Afterschool](#) season ever and generated [extensive media coverage](#) of afterschool. This work could not be more important – children and families continue to struggle, and afterschool programs are being forced to increase fees, reduce staffing, or cut services and hours to cope with budget losses.

The road ahead likely contains even more ups and downs. As the organization prepares for 2010, the Afterschool Alliance vows to redouble its efforts to support afterschool programs and the children and families that depend on them. For more information about the Afterschool Alliance, please visit their website at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

## Building City-wide Out-of-School Time Systems

As the demand and interest in Out-of-school-time (OST) programs continues to increase, many cities in the U.S. have begun to initiate coordinated efforts to create OST “systems”. These systems are described as shared infrastructures developed to support, coordinate and sustain OST programs citywide.

Due to the growing consensus in the pivotal role that system-building efforts play in ensuring the success of citywide OST programs, the Wallace Foundation selected the Finance Project and Public/Private Ventures to lead a study of the investments made in building OST systems. Their research suggests that cities strengthen their OST infrastructure by pursuing four major strategies. These strategies include providing leadership and vision, improving program quality, expanding access to and participation in quality programs, and financing and sustaining citywide programming and infrastructure.

The full results and analysis of the study can be found on the [Wallace Foundation website](#).

Additional resources on the development of city-wide systems for out-of-school time, please visit the National League of Cities at [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org) and the Finance Project at <http://www.financeproject.org/>.

## A Look at the Foundations in Quality Standards Workshops for Afterschool Professionals

In November and December, State Public Policy Group, under permission and with support from the IAA, conducted two workshops directly targeted to afterschool program professionals focusing on improving afterschool program quality. Over the two workshops, these professionals learned the importance of assessing program performance; suggestions for implementation steps for program improvement; good resources for additional guidance; and were walked through a process for systematic program quality improvement.

At the second workshop held December 14 in Ankeny, professionals attending the workshop were treated to presentations from Keli Tallman of Iowa State University Extension/4H Youth Development and John Border of Davenport Community Schools on the topics of Effective Staffing and Professional Development and Fiscal Management, respectfully. An additional 2-hour ICN session will follow in January 2010 to check in with programs on how their implementation of program quality improvement is going.

The Foundations in Quality Standards workshop is one training offered by State Public Policy Group as part of their Impact After School Training Series. Other offerings include Sustainability Planning, Advocacy Training, and Communications Institute. These trainings are specifically targeted to afterschool professionals including administrators, front line staff, community partners, and volunteers. For additional information on any of these trainings, please contact Michelle Rich at [mrich@sppg.com](mailto:mrich@sppg.com) or 515-243-2000.

## IAA Legislative Update

This year, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance will depend on its advocates to continue to build and maintain information-sharing opportunities. Because the IAA did not receive funding sought to support advocacy work, the IAA will be relying even more than in past years on our legislative partners and our member advocates. The Iowa Afterschool Alliance will host a legislative breakfast, seek opportunities to present on out of school time learning opportunities to committees, and monitor legislation as we have for the past few years. Your involvement as an advocate will be critical this year. Stay tuned to the Iowa Afterschool Alliance during the legislative session for more information!

This year promises to be a challenging one in terms of the state budget. With a series of budget cuts already implemented, Governor Culver and the State Government Reorganization Commission have put forward separate proposals to suggest how the state may undertake additional cost-saving measures. The IAA will continue to monitor this process closely, as many of the proposed changes have direct effects upon the IAA and our partner organizations.

The Governor announced his intent to issue an Executive Order to immediately implement some of the proposed measures. Examples of recommendations from both the Committee and the Governor's report include decreasing the number of state-owned vehicles, consolidating data systems within state government, using a master contract for state



purchases, and shifting to a four-day work week for state employees. Suggestions from the reports that impact education include recommendations from the Committee to:

- » Move the Area Education Agency system under the Department of Education. (Commission Recommendation)
- » Disband the State Child Care Advisory Council and turn their duties over to Early Childhood Iowa. (Commission Recommendation)
- » Eliminate funding for the Child Care Assistance Program that is not statewide and specific to programs in Polk County for exceptional children and low-income housing at Homes of Oakridge. (Iowa Efficiency Review Report Recommendation)

For a complete list of the State Government Reorganization Committee's recommendations, visit: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/Isadocs/IntComHand/2010/IHTCM017.PDF>

For the full Iowa Efficiency Review Report to the Governor from Public Works, visit: [http://www.governor.iowa.gov/files/iowa\\_efficiency\\_review\\_report.pdf](http://www.governor.iowa.gov/files/iowa_efficiency_review_report.pdf)

## IAA Partners with Iowa Public Television to Provide Interactive Literacy Tools for Struggling Readers

The IAA and Iowa Public Television are partnering in an effort to provide interactive literacy development tools to afterschool programs in Iowa free of charge. An informational session will be held next month on January 22 to discuss The Electric Company, the first of several multimedia curriculums to be offered through the partnership.

The Electric Company Initiative's mission is to create an immersive literary experience that inspires today's 6-8 year-olds to find a meaningful place for literacy in their everyday lives. The curriculum, based on the educational television show created over thirty years ago, is designed to help struggling readers develop better literacy skills. It aims to entertain children with a cool cast of characters, songs and cartoons while simultaneously teaching decoding, vocabulary, comprehension of connected text and motivation, the four crucial areas of literacy that are often challenging to struggling readers.

The curriculum was developed with significant input from leading researchers and teachers who are experts in their fields. It has been scientifically tested and evidence has been gathered to support the material's effectiveness in increasing the literary skills of struggling readers. The Electric Company materials include an educators' guide with activity sets, DVD's with clips from the program, a CD with 79 skill building activity sheets, an interactive map and much more.

As out of school opportunities have been increasingly recognized as key opportunities to reinforce learning and improve academic achievement, it is the hope of both the Iowa Afterschool Alliance and Iowa Public Television that these free interactive tools can be utilized in a shared project between classroom teachers and afterschool providers. For more information on this opportunity, please contact Brooke Findley at [bfindley@sppg.com](mailto:bfindley@sppg.com) or 515-243-2000.



## MLK Day of Service and the Significance of Service Learning Programs

For the second year in a row, several organizations have partnered together to cultivate a spirit of service in communities throughout Iowa by encouraging the coordination of service projects to be carried out on Dr. Martin Luther King Day. The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service has teamed up with the Governor's Office, the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Iowa Department of Human Rights to encourage statewide participation in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service Initiative.

The IAA recognizes the role that service-learning opportunities can play in the development of our children and youth. Increasing evidence reveals service-learning, both in school and community based settings, enhances learning by building on youth experiences, granting youth a voice in learning, and making instructional goals and objectives more relevant. These programs have also been accredited in providing significant benefits to disadvantaged and at-risk youth by building self-confidence, often translating into academic and personal success. Along with the advantages that children and youth receive by engaging in community service, organizations that coordinate and provide support for community service projects have seen benefits as well. These types of activities have been utilized as vehicles to build strong community partnerships and increase the profiles of Afterschool organizations, often resulting in increased funding and other means of support.

We encourage you to take the time to learn more about coordinating or promoting a service project in your community. Project ideas and resources can be found at [www.mlkday.gov](http://www.mlkday.gov). If you already have a project in mind, please post it online at [www.volunteeriowa.org](http://www.volunteeriowa.org) to ensure the project receives as much publicity and volunteer support as possible! Any questions regarding the MLK Day of Service Initiative can be directed to Heather Graeff at 515-725-3179 or [vista1@iowalifechanging.com](mailto:vista1@iowalifechanging.com).

## Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor requires a unique and intentional style of writing. When writing a letter to the editor, there are some very fundamental points to keep in mind.

Most often the decision to write a letter to the editor stems from an article already published or a specific event or issue that has come to the forefront in a community. One of the most crucial points to remember is to convey your argument or central purpose as quickly as possible. Because the possibility exists of your letter being edited, you should not bury your point or argument in the body or towards the end of your letter. Also, most publications provide instructions or guidelines for writing a letter to the editor. Before beginning your draft, review the guidelines and follow them carefully.

One of the most essential points to remember is to keep your letter concise and to the point. Many letters follow similar formula usually two to three paragraphs. In the first paragraph, introduce your issue and sum up your support or opposition. In the second paragraph, include a few sentences to support your view, and end with a strong and concise summary with a clever punch line. Be sure to keep the letter focused, as too many points will reduce impact.



A task that can't be overlooked is to make sure you proofread your letter thoroughly. Although a publication may edit or reduce content, editors seldom choose letters that require grammatical clean up. Only well proofed, error free letters have a good chance of being published.



Editors often require specific contact information to confirm your identity so be sure to be clear on the contact information required with your submission. You should also send the letter by email if allowed. This will allow the editor to easily cut and paste your letter and easily insert it in the publication.

As earlier mentioned, a letter to the editor is often in response to an article already published. If this is the case, you should submit your response as quickly as possible. Don't wait a few days because it's likely the issue could be old news or new developments could arise that would outdate your letter.

Finally, if you don't want your name published, be sure to make it clearly known. Also, remember to reference the article you are responding to. Be sure to provide the author, title of the article, and issue date.

Perhaps the most important point to keep in mind is to be concise and clear. Remember that short, concise, and logically sound letters invoke confidence. Conversely, long and wordy letters will almost certainly give the impression that the author is trying too hard to make his or her point, calling into question the validity of the point or stance itself.

## A Bit of Background on Burke Milnes, IAA's Americorps VISTA

Burke was born in Iowa City and shortly after became enlisted as a 'military brat' when his father joined the U.S. Air Force. Although this provided the chance to live in many places throughout the country, he always looked forward to spending summers back in northeast Iowa. During high school in Wichita Falls, TX, Burke developed many interests including classical guitar and continues to play music for enjoyment.

Burke attended the University of Texas at San Antonio earning a degree in Political Science and Communication. After graduation, he decided to give the desert climate a try and accepted a position with the Arizona Capitol Times in Phoenix, AZ where he engaged in a diverse set of responsibilities including legislative research, analysis, bill tracking, account management, and marketing.

Burke always maintained the desire to relocate back to the great state of Iowa and did just that in the summer of 2009. He found the perfect opportunity to engage his interests in both public policy and community service when he was recruited to be the first Americorps VISTA assigned to the Iowa Afterschool Alliance housed in State Public Policy Group's office in Des Moines. Burke is extremely excited to join such an experienced and talented team at SPPG and looks forward to playing an instrumental role in improving the accessibility, affordability and sustainability of quality afterschool programs throughout the state.



## Upcoming Events, Professional Development, and Funding Opportunities

### Impact After School Training Series Communications Institute

There is still space available for the upcoming Communications Institutes workshops being conducted by State Public Policy Group. Workshops will be held at the Courtyard Marriott in Ankeny from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the following dates:

- » Wednesday, January 13, 2010, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm; *Media Relations Strategies and Utilization of Technology*
- » Tuesday, February 23, 2010, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm; *The Importance of Networking*
- » Tuesday, March 16, 2010, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm; *Promotion of Afterschool to Stakeholder Sectors*
- » Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm; *Strategic Communications and Action Plan Development*
- » May ICN Session TBD; *Action Plan Implementation Discussion and Technical Assistance*

Registration Fee: \$72.00 per attendee (This is a one-time fee for all sessions and includes food and beverage, as well as any materials required for the training.) Please contact Michelle Rich at [mrich@sppg.com](mailto:mrich@sppg.com) or 515-243-2000 for more information and to register.

### Writing Women Back Into History Essay Contest

For over twenty-five years, The Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Iowa Department of Education, and the State Historical Society of Iowa have co-sponsored a statewide essay contest for 6th – 9th grade students. To allow for a deeper and more relevant appreciation of women's roles in history and celebrate March as Women's History Month, encouraging youth in grades 6-9 to enter the 26th Annual *Write Women Back Into History* Essay Contest.

A student's own thoughts on the significance of the woman's contributions are important. Essays should identify why the woman should be written into history (i.e., what meaningful contributions has she made to her community, the state, nation, or world?), and why she is important to the student. Students should consider what people would learn about our culture from this essay 50 years from now. A successful essay will discuss why the student researched, read about or interviewed, and found the subject to be a role model; it should not just consist of a biographical sketch.

The guidelines and entry form can be found [here](#).

### MLK Essay Contest Reminder

The deadline for the MLK Essay Contest is January 6, 2010. The contest is being held to engage young Iowans in thinking about themes centered on making a positive difference, civic engagement, and volunteerism. Any questions regarding the MLK Essay Contest can be directed to Molly Pim at 515-281-0898 or [molly.pim@iowa.org](mailto:molly.pim@iowa.org).



## Check Out IAA's Facebook Page to Receive Daily Updates on Afterschool Topics

We want to encourage you to check out IAA's Facebook page. Through our page, you can find the latest information and updates regarding IAA and its activities, as well as links to relevant resources and funding opportunities. The page is also a great tool for staying connected with colleagues around the state and keeping current on the latest Afterschool Developments. To search for the IAA page, just type the Iowa Afterschool Alliance in the search box at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). However, please continue to visit the IAA website for the listing of all resources at [www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org](http://www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org).



## Reminder

As we continue our work in promoting afterschool programs, below are words from a famous American to remind us why we do the work we do.

*"A child is a person who is going to carry on whatever you have started. He is going to sit where you are sitting and when you are gone, attend to those things which you think are important. You may adopt all the policies you please, but how they will be carried out depends on him. He will assume control of your cities, states, and nations. He is going to move in and take over your churches, schools, universities, and corporations. Your books are going to be judged, accepted, or condemned by him. The fate of humanity is in his hands. So it might be well to pay him some attention."*

**- Abraham Lincoln**